

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7796

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 4075

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, BG

SUBJ: CONFUSION IN THE NEW REGIME

REF: DACCA 4074

1. IN OUR FIRST EFFORT TO ASSESS NEW REGIME'S "NEXT STEPS", WE SPECULATED THAT COUP PLANNERS APPEARED TO HAVE GIVEN LITTLE THOUGHT TO ANYTHING BEYOND THE DESTRUCTION OF SHEIKH MUJIB AND HIS TRIBE. EVENTS OVER THE SUCCEEDING THREE DAYS HAVE SERVED ONLY TO CNFIRM THIS VIEW.

2. AS DEPARTMENT SHOULD BY NOW BE AWARE, THE QUAD-RUMVIRATE OF COUP LEADERS HAS GIVEN NEGLIGIBLE ATTENTION TO RE-STARTING THE ENGINE OF ADMINISTRATION OR DIRECTING THE RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE BDG. RATHER, WHILE MARTIAL LAW HAS BEEN DECLARED, A PRESIDENT INSTALLED AND A CABINET FORMED, THE RIGORS OF SHEIKH CONFIDENTIAL

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MUJIB'S DEMONETIZATION EASED, AND THE BANK ACCOUNTS OF

THE LATE PRESIDENT'S FAMILY AND CRONIES FROZEN, ALMOST NOTHING ELSE APPEARS TO BE IN PROCESS. THIS IMMOBILITY APPEARS TO DERIVE FROM TENSIONS BETWEEN THE FOUR MAJORS -- FAROOQ RAHMAN, RASHID, NOOR AND DALIM -- AND THEIR SENIORS, AND IT MAY BE THAT THERE ARE TENSIONS BETWEEN SOME AMONG THE FOUR AND OTHERS WHO WERE BROUGHT IN. WHATEVER THE CAUSE, BANGLADESH IS WAITING FOR DIRECTION. IN THE PARAGRAPHS BELOW, WE SUGGEST SOME OF THE PROBLEMS WHICH NEED ATTENTION.

3. IS THERE A MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION? -- DESPITE THE DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW, NO ORDERS (MLO) OR REGULATIONS (MLR) HAVE BEEN ISSUED. WE ARE REPEATEDLY TOLD THEY ARE ABOUT TO BE PROMULGATED, AND WILL APPEAR IN THE NEXT DAY'S PAPER. HOWEVER, ACTIONS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN DEFERRED UNTIL THE COUP PLANNERS AND THEIR MILITARY SUPERIORS WORK OUT RELATIONS AMONG THEMSELVES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE PRESENT INTENTION IS TO HAVE PRESIDENT MUSHTAQUE NAMED CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, WITH MAJORS RASHID, FAROOK, DALIM AND SHAHRIAR (THE LATTER APPEARS TO HAVE PLAYED SOME ROLE IN THE COUP AND TO HAVE SUPPLANTED NOOR) SERVING AS DEPUTY MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATORS. EACH OF BANGLADESH'S NINETEEN DISTRICTS WOULD HAVE A MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR -- WHO WILL HAVE MILITARY UNITS AT HIS HEADQUARTERS FOR HIS USE -- AND CERTAIN MORE IMPORTANT SUB-DIVISIONS SUCH AS NARAYANGANJ AND CHANDPUR WILL HAVE DEPUTY MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATORS. NONE OF THIS CAN GO FORWARD UNTIL ORDERS ARE ISSUED, AND WE CANNOT JUDGE WHEN THAT WILL BE. MEANWHILE, THE MILITARY POSSESSES NO JURIDICAL STANDING TO ENFORCE ANY OF ITS ACTIONS, INCLUDING THE CURFEW, (ALTHOUGH WHO WANTS TO BE SHOT IN TESTING THE PROPOSITION?).

4. CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS -- IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY MLO ABROGATING THE CONSTITUTION, SHEIKH MUJIB'S SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT REMAINS IN EFFECT. ONE CONSEQUENCE IS TO RENDER ILLEGAL MUSHTAQUE'S PRESIDENCY. UNDER THE CONSTITUTION, THE VICE PRESIDENT -- WHO IS ALVIE, IF IMMOBILE -- IS THE PROPER SUCCESSOR TO SHEIKH MUJIB.

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UNTIL THE CONSTITUTION IS ABROGATED, OR AT LEAST SUSPENDED, ALL ACTS OF MUSHTAQUE CAN, IN THEORY, BE CHALLENGED. MOREOVER, WE ARE LEFT WITH OTHER ANOMALIES. THESE INCLUDE THE ROLE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE JATIYO SANGSAD: THEY STILL HOLD OFFICE, AND ARE CHARGED WITH UPHOLDING THE CONSTITUTION. THE CONSTITUTION PROVIDES FOR A SINGLE-PARTY SYSTEM, AND THUS RAISES AN URGENT QUESTION AS TO THE FATE OF BAKSAL.

5. ADMINISTRATION. -- INsofar AS WE CAN JUDGE, THE MINISTERS ARE IMMOBILIZED. THEY ARE RECEIVING NO DIRECTIVES FROM THE PRESIDENT. WHILE THE NEW REGIME HAS ISSUED A STATEMENT REGARDING ITS FOREIGN POLICY, THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT GUIDANCE REGARDING DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. CIVIL SERVANTS ARE UNABLE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS OR TO DIRECT THEIR SUBORDINATES IN OTHER THAN THE MOST ROUTINE MATTERS. PERHAPS THIS SITUATION IS ONLY TO BE EXPECTED SO SOON AFTER OVERTHROW OF MUJIB. HOWEVER, IT IS MADE MORE TROUBLING BY THE STATEMENT MADE BY A CIVIL ASSOCIATE OF COUP PLANNERS, S. B. ZAMAN (SEE DACCA 4074), TO THE EMBASSY'S BANGLADESH POLITICAL ASSISTANT THAT THE NEW DESIRES TO RE-STRUCTURE AND STREAMLINE BG BUT HAS NO IDEAN HOW TO SET ABOUT TASK.

6. CHOICE AND LONGEVITY OF MINISTRY -- THE LIFE OF THE MINISTRY IS VERY MUCH IN QUESTION, AND THUS CONTRIBUTES TO GELID STATE OF THE ADMINISTRATION. SELECTION OF MINISTRY APPEARS TO HAVE INVOLVED DESIRE (A) TO SUGGEST CONTINUITY, ESPECIALLY TO INDIANS, AND (B) TO DEMONSTRATE THAT MAJORITY AMONG SHEKH MUJIB'S GOVERNMENT APPROVED OF COUP. (IT ALSO POSSIBLE THAT IN INITIAL POST-COUP PERIOD, IT WAS THOUGH BEST TO HAVE MINISTERS WHO UNDERSTOOD WORKING OF MINISTRIES AND COULD CARRY ROUTINE MATTERS FORWARD WITH ASSISTANCE OR DIRECTION.) IT SEEMS GENERALLY ACCEPTED, HOWEVER, THAT A SHAKE-UP WILL TAKE PLACE, PERHAPS IN A MONTH OR SO. PRESIDENT MUSHTAQUE IS GENRALLY BELIEVED TO WANT TO HOLD THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO, AS HE DOES NOW, IN ORDER TO VINDICATE HIS POST-LIBERATION OUSTER FROM THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTRY AS RESULT OF, AS HE SEES IT, CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESSURE FROM INDIA AND HIS FORMER COLLEAGUE, TAJUDDIN AHMED. WHETHER HE CAN CINTINUE TO HOLD THE HOME PORTFOLIO IS OPEN TO QUESTION, AND ONE SUGGESTED CADIDATE FOR THE HOME MINISTRY IS NURUL ISLAM MANZOOR, DRIVEN FROM OFFICE ONLY WEEKS AGO BY MUJIB ON RATHER WEAK CHARGES OF CORRUPTION. UNTIL THE SHAKE-UP, SO WIDELY ANTICIPATED, OCCURS, THERE WILL BE FURTHER SEASON FOR DEFERRING ACTION AND DECISIONS.

7. THE BASIC PROBLEM -- THE KEY ISSUE TO BE RESOLVED BEFORE THE BDG RESUMES FUNCTIONING IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, AND THAT WILL BE DELAYED WHILE THE MILITARY PLAYS OUT ITS OWN DRAMA CENTERING ON POWER AND PRESTIGE. (FOR EXPAMPLE, RASHID REPORTEDLY CONTEND THAT HE SHOULD

NOW BE PROMOTED TO BRIGADIER.) HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE THE
MILITARY TO PUT ITS HOUSE IN ORDER IS UNCERTAIN.
BUT EVEN WHEN IT DOES, THE TASK OF FRAMING MARTIAL
LAW ORDERS, WHICH MUST INCLUDE DEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION AND THE CIVILIAN
MINISTRY AND THE ADMINISTRATION, WILL TAKE TIME, PARTICULARLY
SINCE ITS STARTS FROM SQUARE ONE. THE COUP WAS
A SUCCESS, BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT YET IN GOOD SHAPE.
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